

Such teaching fell upon willing ears. Excluded by legislation from a direct participation in public affairs, Dissenters of means and social position threw themselves into the alternative career offered by commerce and finance, and did so the more readily because religion itself had blessed their choice. If they conformed, the character given them by their critics—"opinionating, relying much upon their own judgment . . . ungrateful, as not holding themselves beholden to any man . . . proud, as thinking themselves the only favourites of God, and the only wise or virtuous among men"⁹⁷—disposed them to the left in questions of Church and State. The names of the commercial magnates of the day lend some confirmation to the suggestion of that affinity between religious radicalism and business acumen, which envious contemporaries expressed in their sneers at the "Presbyterian old usurer," "devout misers/" and "extorting Ishban."⁹⁸ The four London members elected in 1661 had not only filled the ordinary civic offices, but had held between them the governorship of the East India Company, the deputy-governorship of the Levant Company, and the masterships of the Salters and Drapers Companies; two of them were said to be Presbyterians, and two Independents,⁹⁷ Of the committee of

leading business men who advised Charles
IPs Govern-
ment on questions of commercial policy,
some, like
Sir Patience Ward and Michael Godfrey,
represented
the ultra-Protestantism of the City, while
others, like
Thomas Papillon and the two Houblons, were
members
of the French Huguenot church in
London.⁹⁸ In
spite of the bitter commercial rivalry with
Holland,
both Dutch capital and Dutch ideas found
an enthu-
siastic welcome in London." Sir
George Downing,
Charles IPs envoy at the Hague, who
endeavoured to
acclimatize Dutch banking methods in
England, and
who, according to Clarendon, was one of the
intriguers
who prepared the war of 1665-7; had been
reared in